

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Heather D. Hadraba for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling presented on April 19, 2011.

Title: The Use of Motivational Interviewing within School Counseling Programs for Academically Unmotivated Eighth Grade Students

Abstract approved:

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Gene Eakin

**Abstract**

School counselors are challenged with creating a wide range of programs to address three developmental domains: personal/social, career, and academic, with an increasing requirement to provide accurate and sufficient data substantiating their professional contributions to students' academic achievement. At the same time, the professional literature reports that during adolescence there is a documented decline in academic motivation for an alarming percent of students. As a result, at-risk students are often referred to school counselors with a brief comment, *capable but unmotivated*. Such referrals leave school counselors in want of strategies to enhance students' motivation for academic success. Finding a strategy that is effective with a diverse student caseload, enhances a counselor's efficiency and overall impact on students' achievement and successful school completion, which ultimately benefits students and society. Such a strategy, Motivational Interviewing (MI) was developed as a client-centered method for therapeutic work with addictive behaviors. Motivational Interviewing attempts to promote behavior change by building intrinsic motivation, through amplifying and clarifying discrepancies between a client's behaviors and values or goals. Literature from

counseling and education suggests that MI may have applications over a variety of counseling settings.

A literature review discusses concerns related to student achievement, describes motivation as a primary component of academic achievement, documents a need for interventions that improve the academic motivation of adolescents, provides information on the new vision for school counseling programs, emphasizes the challenges faced by counselors working with academically unmotivated students, describes MI as an intervention strategy, and suggests that MI may be appropriately used with adolescents in academic settings. A multiple baseline research study attempted to identify if capable, yet underachieving students could enhance their academic motivation and academic success by participating in Motivational Interviewing sessions. Results of this study documented that for two of the three participants, work production increased after MI sessions.

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The Use of Motivational Interviewing within School Counseling Programs with  
Academically Unmotivated Eighth Grade Students

by  
Heather D. Hadraba

A DISSERTATION

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APPROVED:

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Major Professor, representing Counseling

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Dean of the College of Education

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Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Heather D. Hadraba, Author

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## CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

Dr. Tim Bergquist of Northwest Christian College contributed to chapter 3 by providing descriptive statistics and visual analysis of the data.

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# **The Use of Motivational Interviewing within School Counseling Programs for Academically Unmotivated Eighth Grade Students**

## **Chapter 1**

### **General Introduction: Linking the Manuscripts Thematically**

#### **Dissertation Overview**

The purpose of this doctoral study is to demonstrate scholarly work by using the *manuscript document dissertation format* as outlined by the Oregon State University Graduate School. Chapter 1 provides an explanation as to how two journal-formatted manuscripts found in Chapters 2 and 3 are thematically tied and build toward research conclusions pertinent to school counseling and the academic achievement of students. Chapter 2 is a literature review entitled, *A Review of the Literature: The Use of Motivational Interviewing within School Counseling Programs for Academically Unmotivated Eighth Grade Students*, and Chapter 3 presents quantitative research in a manuscript entitled, *Determining the Success of Motivational Interviewing with Academically Unmotivated Eighth Grade Students in a School Counseling Setting*. Chapter 4 provides a short, thematic summary and suggests directions for future research.

These manuscripts thematically converge on the importance of academic intervention in the form of Motivational Interviewing (MI) with adolescents, and its usefulness in the field of school counseling. The first manuscript of this dissertation is a review of current literature related to: academic achievement concerns, motivation as a primary component of academic achievement, intervention during adolescence, a new role for school counselors, need for relevant intervention strategies, and Motivational Interviewing. The second manuscript presents research from a multiple-baseline study of

motivational interviewing, administered by this researcher in a school setting with three academically unmotivated adolescent students.

### **Thematic Introduction**

Declines in academic motivation and student success have been widely observed in the United States (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009). Academic success is dependent on motivation (Klose, 2008). The author of this dissertation is a PhD student in a Counselor Education and Supervision program; the author is also a Nationally Certified Counselor with a MS in Counseling and six-years experience working in a school with a student body of 800 adolescents, who are enrolled as either sixth, seventh or eighth graders. In the author's experience, a common discussion among teachers, counselors, and parents regards strategies to improve academic motivation.

Research shows that one of the main factors causing students to withdraw from schooling in lieu of high school completion is lack of motivation (Cordor, 1999). Nationally, there is a concern regarding the level of underachievement by students, with lack of work production and grades as indicators of underachievement (Chukwu-etu, 2009). Dropping out of school is a significant problem that has serious personal and societal repercussions (Scheel, Madabhushi, & Backhaus, 2009). Students who drop out are more likely to face challenges such as being unemployed, living in poverty, being incarcerated, and becoming a single parent (Glass & Rose, 2008).

On the other hand, motivation is a factor associated with school success. Another variable related to school success is intelligence; however, intelligence only explains about 25% of the variance in academic achievement, whereas motivation is thought to be one of the main factors impacting performance (Steinmayr & Spinath, 2009). A higher

level of academic motivation is associated with higher scores on standardized tests and increased academic performance (Alfaro, Umana-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, Bamaca, & Zeiders, 2009; Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Hoang, 2007). Enhancing students' academic motivation improves their school engagement which is correlated with increased academic work production and achievement (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Hoang, 2007).

Students who drop out of school are most often academically unmotivated (Scheel et al. 2009; Cordor, 1999). Literature reports that the onset of declined academic motivation becomes evident about the time students are middle-school age (Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Research documents that as some students enter into adolescence and transition to middle school, there is a lack of value for academics and school engagement, as demonstrated by such indicators as lower work production, grades and achievement scores (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Schmakel, 2008; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). These problems that typically present themselves in middle school may result in students exiting school prior to graduation (Glass & Rose, 2008).

In order to address issues related to declines in academic motivation and performance, the American School Counseling Association has adopted a *national model*, which is to promote the learning process through three domains: (a) personal/social, (b) career, and (c) academic (Scheel, 2007). In summary, the core purpose of school counseling programs is to facilitate the learning process and academic progress (Otwell & Mullis, 1997). According to Scheel and Gonzalez (2007), "the effectiveness of counselors is increasingly judged by the degree to which they contribute to learning" (p.2).

In addition, the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC) has committed to a vision, such that school counseling programs foster equitable environments where all students access opportunities for academic success. In support, NCTSC school counseling programs are now focused on creating data-driven interventions that increase academic success, with counselors as a resource to support students' motivation, engagement, and performance (The Education Trust, 2003).

While successful school counseling programs must include academic interventions (Otwell & Mullis, 1997; Walz & Bleuer, 1997), research has repeatedly demonstrated that academic progress is dependent upon motivation and motivation intervention has been identified as the primary issue in counseling for many students (Klose, 2008). Based on this author's experience, a significant component of a school counselor's work is finding interventions that effectively enhance academic motivation for a diverse population of students. In spite of the apparent need for evidence-based motivational strategies that school counselors could employ with academically struggling students, Whiston (2002) reported there are few strategies identified that have the prerequisite efficacy.

Motivational Interviewing (MI), a client-centered, therapeutic technique, developed for use in the addictions field; however, may also have efficacy in the academic arena (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Motivational Interviewing builds a collaborative relationship between a counselor and the client, and illuminates discrepancy between the client's values, goals, and behaviors (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Until recently MI was solely used for issues of substance abuse and health-related behaviors. Motivational Interviewing has been widely used with adolescents in a variety of settings

and shown beneficial results in addressing behaviors such as smoking, marijuana use and dependence, dental care avoidance, and dietary adherence (Flaherty, 2006). Initial case study research has supported the use of MI in educational environments (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). While MI done by a school counselor is new practice in educational settings, it has shown promise in reducing school truancy (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009), and promoting college success in freshman students who were at-risk for academic failure through motivating them to become more engaged in their coursework which in turn improved their performance on standardized quizzes (Daugherty, 2008). From a theoretical perspective MI may also be hypothesized to have a positive impact on academic achievement in working with adolescents as this counseling approach values one's autonomy, which is critical when working with adolescents, and may potentially strengthen an adolescent's ability to make decisions (Sindelar, Abrantes, Hart, Lewander, & Spirito, 2006).

### **Rationale**

Identification of counseling interventions that have been demonstrated to enhance student engagement for academic success is imperative. The United States Department of Education reported that in 2007-08 the average drop out rate was 4.1% (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Furthermore, research estimates an increase in students exiting schooling without high school completion (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007). A subsequent statistic was that only seven in ten students successfully finished high school (Swanson, 2008).

Whether a student who is at risk for school failure self refers or is referred by a teacher or parents, a school counselor is usually the professional given responsibility for

intervention with students who lack motivation for academic success. These referrals come with a high expectation that school counselors can solve the issues concerning lack of motivation (Bleuer & Walz, 2002). Based on this author's professional experience, school counselors are in a unique position to plan, implement, and monitor strategic interventions that involve the administration, other staff, groups of students, and individuals. In addition, school counselors have professional background including knowledge about aspects of motivation, and enables them to assist students with school engagement, definition of individual goals, and skill development for academic achievement (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008), as is consistent with the Motivational Interviewing approach.

Nevertheless, motivating students to be academically successful is a challenging task, and school counselors feel pressured to create plans that effectively address student motivation. If plans fail, parents and teachers question that counselor's ability in the role (Bleuer, 1987). However, traditional counseling strategies are often ineffective in producing long-term behavioral change (Bleuer, 1987). In addition, Bleuer and Walz (2002) found that "school counselors identify underachievers as the most difficult students to work with" (p.1). Furthermore, Lambie (2004) asserted, "contributing to the complexity of working with adolescents has been school counselors' lack of specific supervised training in counseling approaches with this population" (p.268). Therefore, effective, research-based strategies are essential in equipping school counselors to intervene with academically unmotivated and underachieving students (Bleuer & Walz, 2002).

Use of a strategy shown to effectively improve students' academic motivation would be consistent with the vision of the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC), which promotes school counselors as advocates for educational equity. The vision is to transform school counselors into powerful change agents and help close gaps in opportunities and achievement for all students, including those from low-income homes and students of color. This approach reframes the focus of school counselors from crisis response to pro-active and preventative strategies, which aligns with the NCTSC vision (The Education Trust, 2003).

Counseling literature contains limited research with definitive data supporting the fact that school counselors have a positive impact on students' academic achievement (Otwell & Mullis, 1997). However, research has shown that underachieving students will not attain school success without strategic interventions by counselors (Chukwu-etu, 2009). Therefore, additional studies need to be conducted by school counselors to show the impact of counseling interventions on academic achievement (Otwell & Mullis, 1997).

In addition, there is a lack of empirical research in educational settings that utilizes the specific approach, Motivational Interviewing, as an intervention. Academic literature fails to provide a description of the MI process within an educational setting (Atkinson & Woods, 2003). Most of the academic literature on MI describes only case-study interventions (Atkinson & Amesu, 2007), although it has supported use of MI in educational environments (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). This earlier research has reported improvement in attendance, self-confidence, and academic self-concept (Kittles &

Atkinson, 2009; Atkinson & Woods, 2003). Educational research has yet to provide an experimental study that implements MI in work with adolescents and analyzes results.

Included in this dissertation study is the first manuscript which provides an overview of academic achievement concerns for American adolescents, discusses motivation as a primary component in academic achievement, describes the necessity of academic motivation intervention during middle-school years, summarizes the new role for school counselors, delivers a statement of the need for relevant intervention strategies, and proposes that Motivational Interviewing could be promising intervention.

The second manuscript describes a multiple-baseline study that was conducted documenting the use of Motivational Interviewing with three academically underachieving, yet capable students and provides subsequent data on the work production of these students during a baseline period, a treatment period, and a follow-up period.

## **Glossary of terms**

Adolescence: children ranging in age from 10 to 14 years old (Hudley, Daoud, Hershberg, Wright-Castro, Polanco, 2002; Eccles, Wigfield, Midgley, Reuman, Iver, & Feldlaufer, 1993).

Ambivalence: feeling two ways about something or someone and inability to make a choice (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

Autonomy: psychological need that is crucial for learning and achievement, independence of one's actions (Shih, 2009).

Empathy: process of gaining access to another psychological state by feeling oneself into the other's experience (Rogers, 1977).

Intrinsic Motivation: engagement in activities for the sole purpose of satisfaction from participating (Karsenti & Thibert, 1995).

Motivation: the process of initiating and maintaining goal directed behaviors (McCoach, 2002).

Underachievers: students with a discrepancy between observed and expected academic performance (Bleuer, 1987).

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE USE OF MOTIVATIONAL  
INTERVIEWING WITHIN SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS  
FOR ACADEMICALLY UNMOTIVATED EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS.

Heather D. Hadraba M.S.  
Oregon State University  
Gene Eakin, Ph.D.

**Chapter 2**  
**A Review of Literature Reporting School Counseling Programs**  
**Use of Motivational Interviewing for Academically Unmotivated**  
**Eighth Grade Students**

**Abstract**

School counselors are challenged with creating a wide range of programs to address three developmental domains: personal/social, career, and academic, with an increasing requirement to provide accurate and sufficient data substantiating their professional contributions to students' academic achievement. At the same time, the professional literature reports that during adolescence there is a documented decline in academic motivation for an alarming percent of students. As a result, at-risk students are often referred to school counselors with a brief comment, *capable but unmotivated*. Such referrals leave school counselors in want of strategies to enhance students' motivation for academic success. Finding a strategy that is effective with a diverse student caseload, enhances a counselor's efficiency and overall impact on students' achievement and successful school completion, which ultimately benefits students and society. Such a strategy, Motivational Interviewing (MI) was developed as a client-centered method for therapeutic work with addictive behaviors. Motivational Interviewing attempts to promote behavior change by building intrinsic motivation, through amplifying and clarifying discrepancies between a client's behaviors and values or goals. Literature from counseling and education suggests that MI may have applications over a variety of counseling settings.

A literature review that discusses concerns related to student achievement, describes motivation as a primary component of academic achievement, documents a need for interventions that improve the academic motivation of adolescents, provides

information on the new vision for school counseling programs, emphasizes the challenges faced by counselors working with academically unmotivated students, describes MI as an intervention strategy, and suggests that MI may be appropriately used with adolescents in academic settings.

### **Introduction**

Research reports that concerns related to declines in adolescents academic achievement is exacerbated throughout middle school years. Achievement can be understood in terms of academic motivation. As students transition to middle school there is a documented decline in motivation for academics, which results in low work production (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Hudley, Daoud, Hershberg, Wright-Castro, & Polanco, 2002; Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Eccles, Wigfield, Midgley, Reuman, Iver, & Feldlaufer, 1993).

In general, the term motivation refers to processes of initiating and maintaining goal directed behaviors (McCoach, 2002). It consists of the biological, physiological, social, and cognitive influences that lead to behaviors (Fulmer & Frijters, 2009). As specific to achievement of adolescents, academic motivation has a powerful impact serving to direct, energize, and regulate academic behaviors (Fisher, Marshall, & Nanayakkara, 2009).

Academic motivation is best described as a continuum ranging from intrinsic to extrinsic. Research suggests a focus on fostering intrinsic motivation, which refers to engagement in activities for the sole purpose of personal satisfaction (Karsenti & Thibert, 1995). Intrinsic motivation for learning is related to higher levels of conceptual understanding, improved memory, and cognitive flexibility (Hudley et al., 2002). An

example of intrinsic motivation related to school learning would be a student reading for sheer enjoyment, or attending school for pleasure (Karsenti & Thibert, 1995). In educational settings, intrinsic motivation can be summarized as a student's personal desire to participate in the learning process (Cordor, 1999). It has been demonstrated that students who are intrinsically motivated for school learning have more academic success (Fisher, Marshall, & Nanayakkara, 2009; Karsenti & Thibert, 1995; Keith, Wetherbee, & Kindzia, 1995).

In light of the documented decline in academic success, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), the Education Trust, and the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC), have all recognized the importance of focusing on students' school success. The new vision charges school counselors with examining the academic achievement of their students, intervening with students who struggle academically before they become disengaged, and supporting school engagement of diverse student groups. The literature review for this doctoral research has focused on the school counselor's role in relation to these three areas for improving student motivation and academic success.

Improving student achievement presents school counselors with a significant challenge related to finding effective interventions for students struggling with academic motivation (Klose, 2008; Bleuer & Walz, 2002). One such intervention strategy that has recently been recognized for possible application in educational settings is Motivational Interviewing (MI), which has demonstrated success reducing and correcting addictive and other health-risk behaviors among adolescents (Brody, 2009; Adams & Madison, 2006; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Research has demonstrated that MI improves the

academic performance of college students with low academic progress (Daugherty, 2008), and suggests that MI is likely to be an effective intervention for younger students with school motivation issues (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009; Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007; McNamara, 1992). Nevertheless, at this time there is need for additional research with quantitative findings on the impact of MI in educational settings (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009; Atkinson & Woods, 2003; Otwell & Mullis, 1997).

The following literature review will consist of six key areas: current academic achievement concerns for American adolescents, the motivational component in academic achievement, academic motivation intervention during middle-school years, the new role for school counselors, the need for relevant intervention strategies, and Motivational Interviewing as a promising intervention.

### **Overview of academic achievement concerns**

The Department of Education reported in 2007-08 the current average drop out rate was 4.1%. (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Emerging statistics document that only seven in ten students are successfully finishing high school (Swanson, 2008). Given this information, there is great concern in education regarding the underachievement of students and the negative impact on work production, grades, and achievement scores (Chukwu-etu, 2009). Therefore, educators are examining the behaviors that promote academic success as well as the indicators of underachievement.

As defined by a survey of public school educators, academically motivated and engaged students demonstrate school engagement by the following indicators, they believe school is important, work hard in school, love school and learning, have positive attitudes about schoolwork, and have high educational aspirations (Keith, Wetherbee, &

Kindzia, 1995). On the other hand, academically capable students who are at-risk for underachievement fail to display these motivational indicators, which, has led many educational experts to identify lack of motivation as a major cause of underachievement and school drop out rates (Scheel, Madabhushi, & Backhaus, 2009; Cordor, 1999).

Given the alarming information that approximately one-third of all high school students withdraw from school in lieu of graduation (Glass & Rose, 2008; Scheel, 2007), there is an emphasis for understanding the personal and societal repercussions of school failure (Scheel et al., 2009). Students who drop out are more likely to face challenges such as being unemployed, living in poverty, becoming incarcerated, and becoming a single parent (Glass & Rose, 2008). Therefore, completion of high school is positively correlated to future life success (Glass & Rose, 2008).

In addition to the concern for the drop out rate, adolescents experiencing disengagement in school are more likely to be truant, academically unsuccessful, and disruptive to the educational environment of their peers (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). A lack of school motivation may develop into later emergence of behavioral problems which can impact academic success and future life goals (Roeser & Eccles, 1998). These concerns create a need to determine why students are deciding to leave school early.

In a survey conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, students documented their reasons for leaving school prior to graduation. A majority of students stated that they were unmotivated to work hard (Glass & Rose, 2008; Azzam, 2007). Seventy percent of students believed that they could have graduated if they had tried harder to complete schoolwork (Azzam, 2007). Low motivation and lack of engagement combined with negative perceptions of the school environment, and a limited hope for

academic success increases the risk for students to consider dropping out of school (Hudley et al., 2002).

Underachievement can lead to students distancing themselves from the significant adults in their life (Bleuer & Walz, 2002; Bleuer, 1987). In addition, low self-esteem, and school becoming a difficult place to be, only serves to reinforce feelings of failure (Bleuer, 1987). These experiences of failure can be emotionally destructive for a student and can lead to learned helplessness and feelings of inability which negatively impacts future life success (Bempechat, Boulay, Piergross, & Wenk, 2008). Given this information, determining why these students are academically underachieving is of crucial importance.

Research shows that students who drop out are less academically motivated than graduates (Deschamps, 1992). Disengagement or underachievement includes a) low self-concept, (b) negative attitude towards school, (c) negative peer influence, and (d) low self-motivation and self-regulation. (Hufton, Elliott, & Illushin, 2002; McCoach, 2002). Determining the components of academic achievement is of most importance to the future academic success of struggling students.

### **Motivation as a primary component of academic achievement**

There is a conceptual understanding that academic engagement and success is dependent upon student motivation. Another variable related to school success is intelligence; however, intelligence only explains about 25% of the variance in academic achievement, whereas motivation is thought to be one of the main factors impacting performance (Steinmayr & Spinath, 2009). Given the information that motivation is essential to academic achievement, it is imperative for those who work with adolescents

to understand how motivation relates to school success (Steinmayr & Spinath, 2009; Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Hoang, 2007; McCoach, 2002; Cordor, 1999; Anderman & Midgley, 1998; Keith et al., 1995), and how to enhance a student's motivation to achieve individualized academic goals.

Adolescents who have reported higher levels of motivation have higher scores on standardized tests and improved work production. (Alfaro, Umana-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, Bamaca, & Zeiders, 2009). In addition, academically motivated students engage in their schoolwork with confidence and interest, are less likely to leave school in lieu of graduation, suffer fewer disciplinary problems, and are increasingly resilient in the face of setbacks (Pajares & Urdan, 2002).

On the other hand, students who are unmotivated or underachieve are often referred to the school counselor for intervention (Bleuer, Palomares, & Walz, 1993). Upon referral cumulative test scores are reviewed, and typically these students have average or above average scores in terms of cognitive ability. It can be hypothesized that the discrepancy between ability and work production may be explained by lack of motivation to engage in learning (Wigfield, Lutz, & Wagner, 2005). Furthermore, not all students who drop out of school have learning difficulties or are disadvantaged due to environmental challenges (Cordor, 1999). In a recent study examining a student population of 13,300 ranging in age from 12-16 who left school early, the researchers found that 10% of students who drop out were strongly unmotivated students with no socio-emotional difficulties and average grades (Janosz, Archambault, Morizot, & Pagani, 2008).

Cordor (1999) proposed that unmotivated and underachieving students are not failing to succeed because they are cognitively struggling to learn or lack the ability, but rather they are removing themselves from their own learning. Underachievers may lack motivation and self-regulation skills, but rarely do they lack the awareness of strategies to improve work production. More commonly, underachieving students are not motivated to use the skills and strategies that they already have (McCoach, 2002). Given this information, it seems clear that an emphasis should be made on locating interventions to increase motivation (Wigfield et al., 2005) during the crucial time periods of academic declines that many adolescents experience.

### **Intervention is critical during middle-school years**

Middle school has been identified as a time period of academic risk (Murdock, Anderman, & Hodge, 2000). Declines in school motivation, interest in school, and performance are documented in early adolescence (Schmakel, 2008; Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Eccles et al., 1993). Research documents that as students enter adolescence and transition from elementary school to middle school, for many there is a diminished value placed on academics and school engagement as demonstrated by such indicators as lower work production, grades and achievement scores (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Schmakel, 2008; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). These indicators typically present themselves in middle school and can result in students exiting school prior to graduation (Glass & Rose, 2008). Lack of motivation is particularly apparent for many adolescents during their transition to middle school (Cordor, 1999) where they often perceive themselves as less academically capable, find school less interesting and useful, resulting in lower grades (Roeser & Eccles, 1998).

Nevertheless, research focused on student perspectives of motivation and achievement documents an incongruence in which students state that completion of their education is important, however, repeated studies of sixth through ninth grade students have documented that interest in academics, motivation for academics, and academic achievement levels decline dramatically during early adolescence (Walker & Greene, 2009; Wigfield et al., 2005; Schmackel, 2008; Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Hamacheck, 1972).

A possible explanation for this incongruence could be that self-esteem and motivation may be particularly vulnerable during the transition to middle school, which can significantly impact academics (Walker & Greene 2009; Wigfield et al., 2005; Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Many experts in education have identified lack of student motivation as a core reason for low academic scores and school drop out rates (Murdock et al., 2000; Cordor, 1999; Eccles et al., 1993). Much of the research on student achievement focuses on adolescent beliefs, value systems, and goals; the crucial aspect of motivation. The implication of this research is that motivational problems become more apparent during the early adolescent time period.

Given that research documents that during this time period academic success hinges on the motivation to achieve (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Hoang, 2007), intervention is needed to enhance intrinsic motivation and school success. Further emphasizing the need for intervention is research that documents that middle school students who are academically capable, but who fail to live up to their potential, will struggle in high school (Cordor, 1999). Negative academic attitudes and maladaptive motivational beliefs are good predictors of future challenges (Murdock et al., 2000).

The need for intervention with middle school students increases referrals to the school counselor by teachers and parents. Underachieving students are referred to the school counselor with the information that the students are unmotivated and falling behind their peers (Bleuer et al., 1993) and academic intervention is necessary.

### **The new role for school counselors**

In order to address issues related to declines in academic motivation and performance, the American School Counseling Association has adopted a *national model*, which is to promote the learning process through three domains: (a) personal/social, (b) career, and (c) academic (Scheel, 2007). In addition, the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC) has committed to a vision, such that school counseling programs foster equitable environments where all students access opportunities for academic success (The Education Trust, 2003). In support, school counseling programs are now focused on creating data-driven interventions that increase academic success, with counselors as a resource to support students' motivation, engagement, performance. According to Scheel and Gonzalez (2007), "the effectiveness of counselors is increasingly judged by the degree to which they contribute to learning" (p.2). In summary, the core purpose of school counseling programs is to facilitate the learning process and academic progress (Bleuer & Walz, 2002; Otwell & Mullis, 1997).

The current shift towards counselors becoming leaders in data-driven programs has created a need to develop effective academic interventions. These academically focused interventions with students are perhaps the most important tasks for counselors, given that motivation intervention is the primary issue in counseling for many individual students (Klose, 2008). Counselors are called upon to examine school data, identify

students who are at-risk for disengagement at school, and then work with academically struggling students, their parents, and teachers to help enhance student motivation (Stone & Dahir, 2006; Wigfield et al., 2005).

School counselors in the past worked in isolation and focused on serving the individual social-emotional needs of the students. In addition they often filled in the gaps and performed jobs that were not done by others, such as writing behavior referrals or monitoring the lunchroom. The NCTSC vision has encouraged counselors to become change agents to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement for all students (The Education Trust, 2003). Developing academic interventions that intervene with struggling students aligns with the NCTSC vision of closing the achievement gap.

School counselor effectiveness needs to be documented through research in order to validate school counselors and school counseling programs (Whiston, 2002). With increased emphasis in the school counseling profession on contributing to student learning, the challenge arises to demonstrate the efficacy of school counseling to positively influence academic performance through personal/social, academic, and career counseling (Scheel, 2007). School counselors are concerned with the comprehensive needs of their students (i.e., educational, career, personal, and social) (American School Counseling Association, 2003). Though these are core tenets for school counselors, the main focus that underlies counseling programs is enhancing academic success (Otwell & Mullis, 1997).

Successful school counseling programs must include academic interventions (Otwell & Mullis, 1997; Walz & Bleuer, 1997). Increasing academic motivation creates a resiliency that has shown to improve academic outcomes (Alfaro et al., 2008).

Therefore, the main goals for school counselors are to discuss and enhance motivation for change (Tevyaw & Monti, 2004); however, determining the most impactful intervention is still necessary.

### **School counselors' need for intervention strategies**

As previously discussed, school counselors are a resource for intervention with students. Parents and teachers frequently reach out for interventions from the school counselor when academic declines are of concern (Bleuer & Walz, 2002). Upon examining the reasons behind academic declines and determining the population that is capable, but unmotivated, school counselors begin a process of intervention. School counselors are in need of an effective method to work with these students and their lack of academic motivation. There is pressure on counselors to create effective plans to address student motivation and if these plans fail, parents and teachers question the counselor's ability to do their job (Bleuer, 1987).

Bleuer (1987) found that "school counselors identify underachievers as the most difficult students to work with" (p.1). Bleuer (1987) posited, "motivating students to academically achieve is a challenging task and traditional counseling approaches are often ineffective in producing long term behavior change" (p.1). The resources for working with underachievers are limited (Bleuer & Walz, 2002; Bleuer et al.; 1993). School counselors lack specific training in counseling approaches with underachievers (Lambie, 2004). Therefore, effective research based strategies are essential for school counselors to be able to intervene with academically unmotivated and underachieving students (Bleuer & Walz, 2002).

Academically underachieving students are typically referred by, teachers, or parents to the school counselor for intervention (Bleuer et al.; 1993). Referrals are frequent because school counselors have a unique role. They work with smaller groups of students and have specialized training that enables them to help students define, work towards, and reach their goals (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008). These referrals come with a high expectation that the school counselor can solve the issue concerning the student's lack of motivation (Bleuer & Walz, 2002). Many students that visit the school counselor are ambivalent and unmotivated to change (Lambie, 2004).

School counselors try to find appropriate intervention strategies to match the needs of students. Given that motivational strategies contribute to successful academic progress for students (Lynet, Kasandi, & Wamocha, 2008), school counselors should be capable of working with students to move them to higher levels of motivation that include self-regulated independent learning, enhancement of purpose for academic ability, and effort (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007).

Nevertheless, without effective tools to intervene with academically unmotivated students, school counselors are unaware how to address the escalating problem of student failure. Counselors have a caseload of struggling students and a lack of evidence-based motivational strategies to assist in facilitating positive behavior change. Dr. Gene Eakin and Dr. Kathy Biles (personal communication, September 1, 2010) have taught Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation workshops in six states including at three ASCA pre-conferences that have been attended by over 1400 school counselors. When they have asked the participants if they have ever heard of Motivational Interviewing, only ten

percent indicated they had some awareness of this practice with a strong evidence base in the health-risk behavior field.

### **Motivational Interviewing as a promising intervention**

Motivational Interviewing (MI), is a client-centered, therapeutic technique which may be a promising strategy for school counselors working with underachieving students. Motivational Interviewing was developed for the treatment of addictive behaviors. Miller and Rollnick (2002) defined MI as “a client-centered directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence.” (p.25).

Recently, it has been stated MI appears to be effective with a wide range of behaviors in addition to addictive behaviors (Adams & Madison, 2006; Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

Motivational Interviewing builds a collaborative relationship between a counselor and the client, and illuminates the discrepancy between the client’s values, goals, and their behaviors (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

Until recently, MI was primarily used for issues of substance abuse and other health-related behaviors. Emerging research on younger populations has demonstrated the positive effect that MI has on reducing substance use among adolescents (Naar-King & Suarez, 2011). Therefore, MI is suitable for intervention with adolescents (Kittle & Atkinson, 2009), given that it has been widely used with adolescents in a variety of settings and shown beneficial results addressing behaviors such as smoking, marijuana use and dependence, avoidance of dental care, and dietary adherence (Flaherty, 2006). Initial case study research has supported the use of MI in educational environments (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). While MI done by a school counselor is new practice in educational settings, it has shown promise in reducing school truancy (Enea & Dafinoiu,

2009) and promoting success with college freshman who were at-risk for academic failure. These students became more engaged in their coursework and subsequently improved their performance on standardized quizzes (Daugherty, 2008). Motivational Interviewing may also have a positive impact on academic achievement as this counseling approach values one's autonomy, which is critical when working with adolescents, and may potentially strengthen an adolescent's ability to make decisions (Sindelar, Abrantes, Hart, Lewander, & Spirito, 2006).

Motivational Interviewing appears to be a good technique to use with adolescents because of its brief duration, non-confrontational, and empathetic counseling style (Lawendowski, 1998; Tevyaw & Monti, 2004). In addition, MI focuses on learning skills to modify or regulate behavior (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). Honoring and respecting adolescents, while avoiding arguing for change may lead to a positive connection that influences behavior change that might not typically occur with parents and teachers (Tevyaw & Monti, 2004).

Motivational Interviewing is rooted in the work of Carl Rogers and his client-centered therapy (Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Arkowitz & Westra, 2009). Carl Rogers (1977) discussed the importance of unconditional positive regard and empathy when working with clients. This style of counseling enhances trust, which can increase willingness to change (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). MI can be thought of as client-centered therapy with additional components that build a strong collaborative relationship and reduce resistance to change (Arkowitz & Westra, 2009; Lundahl & Burke, 2009; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Motivation for change is impressionable and is formed within the context of relationships, in particular the relationship between counselor and client

(Rollnick, Miller, & Butler, 2008). Within this relationship, a counselor facilitates exploration of possible behavior changes while employing the specific MI principles; expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, and supporting self efficacy and eliciting, and reinforcing change talk (Arkowitz & Westra, 2009; Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009).

Within this collaborative relationship, a set of strategies is employed to increase intrinsic motivation, while resolving ambivalence about change (Lundahl & Burke, 2009; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Motivational ambivalence refers to the idea that clients often engage in behaviors while at the same time expressing the desire to avoid these same behaviors (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009). A student who is ambivalent about schoolwork may avoid homework, while, at the same time express a desire to complete the work to be able to pass their classes. The ambivalent person experiences opposite motivations due to the benefits and costs associated with getting/not getting caught up in a behavior (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009).

Motivational Interviewing with its emphasis on client values, perspective, and process is a natural fit for working with adolescents who have an increasing need for autonomy (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). Autonomy is a psychological need that is crucial for learning and achievement (Shih, 2009). However, the desire for autonomy is powerful during adolescence, which may increase apprehension of working with authority figures that are asserting power over them. Approaching these students in a non-confrontational manner can lessen the defensiveness that can commonly occur (Flaherty, 2006). Therefore, the collaborative style of MI could be a counseling intervention that may lessen resistance (Lambie, 2004), while resulting in positive

outcomes for students, such as better attendance, stronger self- efficacy, and improved academic self-concept (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009).

Research has shown that providing a non-confrontational, respectful, and open approach, while honoring adolescent preferences and confidentiality, may be able to better serve the needs of adolescents (Kia-Keating, Brown, Schulte, & Monreal, 2008). In general, people are more likely to evolve and change in a positive direction when avoiding battles for change (van Wormer, 2007).

Furthermore, MI avoids confrontation and informing a student of what they are required to do, but supports students in decision making about possible changes (Naar-King & Suarez, 2011). Providing adolescents a non-confrontational opportunity to reflect on their lives and behaviors without having to resist adult challenges allows for new relationship dynamics, while increasing interest in motivation (Winslade & Monk, 2007).

Brief interventions have been shown to change adolescent behavior (Olsen, Gaffney, Lee, & Starr, 2008). MI is considered one of the most influential and frequently used brief interventions (Tevyaw & Monti, 2004). Research on MI has shown effectiveness in reducing substance use after a single session (Brody, 2009), and MI seems to be able to work more quickly than other treatments focused on behavior change (Arkowitz & Westra, 2009; van Wormer, 2007). These research outcomes with adolescents have created a hope that MI can be used to focus on academic behavioral changes for adolescents. The time that a school counselor has for counseling sessions is limited, therefore a brief intervention is needed. The number, time limit, and content of

MI sessions are flexible, which would fit into the school counselors' demanding schedule (Lawendowski, 1998).

Furthermore, there are specific advantages to using MI within school counseling programs. McNamara (1992) identified the following advantages that result from MI with a school counselor or teacher:

1. The model changes from counselor-active to client-active
2. The model of intervention changes from counselor dominant/client submissive to a relationship that is collaborative
3. The responsibility for change resides within the client, with support from the counselor
4. The reasons behind the problem change from external attribution to internal attribution

The counseling literature contains limited research with definitive data supporting the fact that school counselors have a positive impact on students' academic achievement (Otwell & Mullis, 1997). Additional studies need to be conducted by school counselors to show the impact of counseling interventions on academic achievement (Otwell & Mullis, 1997).

Considering that research has shown that underachieving students will not attain school success without strategic interventions by counselors, having a counseling technique that improves academic motivation is essential (Chukwu-etu, 2009). Most of the academic literature on MI describes only case-study interventions (Atkinson & Amesu, 2007; Atkinson & Woods, 2003), although it has supported use of MI in educational environments (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). This earlier research has reported

improvement in attendance, self-confidence, and academic self-concept (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009; Atkinson & Woods, 2003). However, prior positive findings suggest further research into the effectiveness and applicability of MI in educational environments (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

Academically unmotivated students are a potentially difficult population to serve. Ambivalence about change and a growing need for autonomy may create defensiveness in counseling settings. Supporting autonomy in a collaborative counseling relationship enhances the student's personal responsibility for change. Collaborating and supporting unmotivated and disengaged students is congruent with the role of a school counselor. Adolescents who are struggling with academics due to a lack of motivation need interventions to refocus and reprioritize academic goals. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the student to make a change. Having said this, counselors are able to empower adolescents, which can enhance adolescent autonomy and emphasize their capability for change.

School counselors are posed with new challenges as they try to serve the academic needs of struggling students. As school counseling programs evolve, counselors are searching for effective strategies to work with struggling students. Research is necessary on how to incorporate academic interventions into school counselor practice in order to keep the large population of academically capable students motivated to complete school (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007).

Motivation has been linked to academic success. The unmotivated, yet capable student is often referred to the school counselor for intervention. Intervention needs to be

brief and capable of fitting into a school setting. Intervening with struggling students is necessary for school counseling programs. The profession of school counseling is at risk because there is a lack of substantial research showing that school counseling programs produce positive results for children (Whiston, 2002). School counselors may believe that they make a difference, but without supportive data, school counselors run the risk of losing their positions (Whiston, 2002).

Although research has supported the use of MI for intervening with addictive behaviors, an absence of research on the applications of MI in educational settings remains (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). Case study research has supported the use of MI in these settings and reports improvement in attendance, self-confidence, and academic self-concept (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009; Atkinson & Woods, 2003). Motivational Interviewing provides strategies that can produce positive outcomes that can be used in a short time frame to help students who are unmotivated to change (Lambie, 2004). Improving student motivation in public education is an essential component to ensure academic progress (Cordor, 1999).

Low motivation and engagement and a lack of academic success can lead to many adolescents leaving school early (Hudley et al., 2002). Intervention is necessary to increase engagement of struggling students who may withdraw from school in lieu of graduation. There is a strong need for research that tests and validates possible models of intervention that attempt to address the underachievement problem in education (Bleuer & Walz, 2002).

Motivational Interviewing has successfully treated maladaptive behaviors and ambivalence in clients in the field of addictions and other health related risk behavior

fields (Hecht, Borrelli, Breger, DeFrancesco, Ernst, & Resnicow, 2005; Tevyaw & Monti, 2004). Applying these strategies to maladaptive behaviors in the area of academic motivation seems to be a natural fit for the ambivalence that adolescents experience when lacking motivation to succeed (Flaherty, 2006). Motivational Interviewing addresses the need for a brief intervention that produces long term outcomes needed for effective behavior change. The literature suggests that the collaborative approach of MI could be very helpful when forming a new therapeutic relationship with adolescents.

This literature review suggests that MI may be an effective therapeutic intervention for adolescents who are academically unmotivated. Research has shown that MI is an effective intervention for addiction and other health related behaviors. By applying these skills and strategies with the academically unmotivated adolescent population, school counselors can intervene to create positive behavior change.

This study recommends that: (1) school counselors engage in data driven activities that promote academic success of students, (2) Motivational Interviewing could be a useful intervention with academically unmotivated students, (3) school counselors be trained in MI skills and strategies.

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DETERMINING THE SUCCESS OF MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING WITH  
ACADEMICALLY UNMOTIVATED EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS IN A SCHOOL  
COUNSELING SETTING.

Heather D. Hadraba M.S.  
Oregon State University  
Gene Eakin, Ph.D.

### **Chapter 3**

## **Determining the Success of Motivational Interviewing with Academically Unmotivated Eighth Grade Students in a School Counseling setting**

### **Abstract**

School counselors have the responsibility to contribute to the academic motivation and success of students. Students who are unmotivated and academically unsuccessful have a higher risk of leaving school early. The literature suggests that motivation is central to academic achievement. Historically, school counselors focused their interventions on the emotional needs of students in the belief that increased academic performance would accompany the emotional growth their students achieved. The American School Counseling Association and the National Center for Transforming School Counseling are now encouraging school counselors to be leaders in the call for improving the academic achievement of students. School counselors, therefore, are in need of data driven interventions that increase the motivation of underachieving students. There is increased pressure to intervene with struggling students as school counselors are seen as a resource to improve academic success. Although school counselors are seen as a resource for academic intervention, there remains to be a conclusive strategy to use with academically unmotivated students. This study attempted to identify if capable yet underachieving students could enhance their academic motivation and academic success by participating in Motivational Interviewing sessions. Results of this study documented that for two of the three participants, work production increased after MI sessions.

## **Introduction**

The U.S. Department of Education (2008) reported that in 2007-08 the current average drop out rate was 4.1%. Declines in academic motivation and student success have been widely observed in the United States (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009). These declines emphasize the need for academic intervention with struggling students. The American School Counseling Association has sought to address the role of a school counselor by encouraging interventions for academic declines. Academic intervention has been recognized as the primary mission for school counselors (American School Counseling Association, 2003; Bleuer & Walz, 2002). These interventions with students are perhaps the most important tasks a counselor has in a school.

The author of this dissertation is a PhD student in a Counselor Education and Supervision program; the author is also a Nationally Certified Counselor, with a MS in Counseling, and six-years experience working in a school with a student body of 800 adolescents who are enrolled as either sixth, seventh or eighth graders. In the author's experience, a common discussion among teachers, counselors, and parents regards strategies to improve academic motivation.

This study reviews relevant literature on adolescent trends in education, adolescent achievement and motivation, Motivational Interviewing (MI) within school counseling programs, and attempts to demonstrate MI as an effective intervention for academically unmotivated and unsuccessful students.

This research addresses the following question:

- Do Motivational Interviewing sessions increase work production for academically unmotivated students?

## **Review of Literature**

### *Academic achievement concerns*

Emerging statistics demonstrate that only seven in ten students are successfully finishing high school (Swanson, 2008). Given this information, there is great concern in education regarding the underachievement of students and the negative impact on work production, grades, and achievement scores (Chukwu-etu, 2009). Therefore, educators are examining the behaviors that promote academic success and the indicators of underachievement.

As defined by a survey of public school educators, academically motivated and engaged students demonstrate school engagement by the following indicators: they believe school is important, work hard in school, love school and learning, have positive attitudes about schoolwork, and have high educational aspirations (Keith, Wetherbee, & Kindzia, 1995). On the other hand, academically capable students who are at-risk for underachievement fail to display these motivational indicators which has led many educational experts to identify lack of motivation as a major cause of underachievement and school drop out rates (Scheel, Madabhushi, & Backhaus, 2009; Cordor, 1999).

### *Motivation as a primary component of academic achievement*

There is a conceptual understanding that academic engagement and success is dependent upon student motivation. In support of this contention, data documents that school success is highly related to intelligence, yet intelligence only explains about 25% of the variance in academic achievement. Therefore, motivation is thought to be one of the main factors that address performance variance not explained by intelligence (Steinmayr & Spinath, 2009). Given the information that motivation is essential to

academic achievement, it is imperative for those who work with adolescents to understand how motivation relates to school success (Steinmayr & Spinath, 2009; McCoach, 2002; Anderman & Midgley, 1998; Keith et al., 1995).

Increased academic motivation is positively correlated to academic success (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Hoang, 2007; Keith et al., 1995). Thus, improving student motivation is essential for their academic progress (Cordor, 1999). As a result of this information, educators continually question how to enhance a student's motivation to achieve individualized academic goals.

Declines in school motivation and school engagement are documented by students work performance in school (Roeser & Eccles, 1998). Academically capable students who lack motivation tend to complete less schoolwork, which can negatively impact their grade reports. Academic motivation encourages students to engage in school and to complete schoolwork which leads to academic success (Wang & Pomerantz, 2009; Hoang, 2007). Most students who drop out report that they were not motivated to work hard (Glass & Rose, 2008; Azzam, 2007). Academically motivated students engage in their schoolwork with confidence and interest, are less likely to drop out of school, suffer fewer disciplinary problems, and are more resilient in the face of setbacks than less motivated students (Pajares & Urdan, 2002). Research shows that students who drop out are less academically motivated than graduates, which emphasizes that raising student motivation is essential for academic progress and completion of school (Cordor, 1999; Deschamps, 1992). In summary, an emphasis for educators is to determine the crucial time period when academic declines begin to occur (Wigfield et al., 2005).

### *Intervention during middle school*

The first sign of academic risk for dropping out of high school begins in middle school and presents itself as lack of success in school (Glass & Rose, 2008). This lack of success is demonstrated by disconnection from the learning environment, lack of commitment to completing schoolwork, and lower achievement scores. Middle school has been identified as a period of academic risk, where students who have previously been successful begin to demonstrate a lack of motivation for schoolwork (Murdock, Anderman, & Hodge, 2000). Raising concerns for educators is that middle school students who have previously demonstrated academic capabilities, but who fail to live up to their potential will eventually begin to struggle in high school (Murdock et al., 2000; Cordor, 1999).

Educators are committed to intervening with struggling students in a proactive manner. Academically struggling students are targeted for intervention in order to assist them in improving their academic performance. As educators address this issue, middle school counselors are a resource for intervention with these students who display negative attitudes, lower academic performance, and a lack of motivation for academics.

### *The new role for school counselors*

In order to address issues related to declines in academic motivation, The American School Counseling Association has adopted a *national model*, which is to promote the learning process through three domains: (a) personal/social, (b) career, and (c) academic (Scheel, 2007). In summary, the core purpose of school counseling programs is to facilitate the learning process and academic progress (Otwell & Mullis,

1997). According to Scheel and Gonzalez (2007), “the effectiveness of counselors is increasingly judged by the degree to which they contribute to learning” (p.2).

Furthermore, the National Center for Transforming School Counseling (NCTSC) has committed to a vision that school counseling programs foster equitable environments where all students access opportunities for academic success. NCTSC based school counseling programs are now focused on creating data driven interventions that increase academic success, with counselors as a resource to support students’ motivation, engagement, and performance (The Education Trust, 2003).

While successful school counseling programs must include academic interventions (Otwell & Mullis, 1997; Walz & Bleuer, 1997), research has repeatedly demonstrated that academic progress is dependent upon motivation and motivation intervention has been identified as the primary issue in counseling for many students (Klose, 2008). Based on this author’s experience, a significant component of a school counselor’s work is finding interventions that effectively enhance academic motivation for a diverse population of students. At this time, there remains a lack of information on strategies that could positively impact student motivation (Whiston, 2002). Academic intervention has been recognized as a crucial component of a school counselor’s role. It can be defined as the primary mission for school counselors (The American School Counseling Association, 2003; Bleuer & Walz, 2002). This mission ignites a calling for all school counselors to develop school counseling programmatic systems to intervene with students who are academically struggling. As school counseling programs develop these interventions they are held accountable for the academic success of students.

*School counseling and intervention strategies*

Identification of counseling interventions that have been demonstrated to enhance student engagement for academic success is critical, as revealed by recent drop out estimates of an increase in students exiting schooling without high school completion (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007). Whether a student who is at risk for school failure self refers or is referred by a teacher or parents, a school counselor is usually the professional given responsibility for intervention with students who lack motivation for academic success. These referrals come with a high expectation that school counselors can solve the issues concerning lack of motivation (Bleuer & Walz, 2002).

Based on this author's professional experience, school counselors are in a unique position to plan, implement, and monitor strategic interventions that involve the administration, other staff, groups of students and individuals. In addition, school counselors have professional background, which includes knowledge about aspects of motivation that prepares them to assist students with engaging in school, defining individual goals, and increasing their levels of academic achievement (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008).

Nevertheless, motivating students to be academically successful is a challenging task, and school counselors feel pressured to create plans that effectively address student motivation. If the plans fail, parents and teachers question that counselor's ability in the role (Bleuer, 1987). However, traditional counseling strategies are often ineffective in producing long-term behavioral change (Bleuer, 1987). In addition, Bleuer and Walz (2002) found that "school counselors identify underachievers as the most difficult students to work with" (p.1). Furthermore, Lambie (2004) asserted, "contributing to the

complexity of working with adolescents has been that school counselors lack supervised training in counseling approaches with this population” (p.268). Therefore, effective, research-based strategies are essential for school counselors to be able to intervene with academically unmotivated and underachieving students (Bleuer & Walz, 2002).

### *Motivational Interviewing*

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a client-centered, therapeutic technique that has shown promise for school counselors working with students to improve their academic achievement. Motivational Interviewing builds a collaborative relationship between a counselor and the client, and illuminates the discrepancy between the client’s goals, values, and their behaviors (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Until recently, MI was solely used for issues of substance abuse and health-related behaviors. Motivational Interviewing has been widely used with adolescents in a variety of settings and shown beneficial results (Flaherty, 2006). Initial case study research has supported the use of MI in educational environments (Kittles & Atkinson, 2009). While MI conducted by a school counselor is new practice in educational settings, it has demonstrated success in reducing school truancy (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009), and promoting college success in freshman students who were at-risk for academic failure, motivating students to become more engaged in their coursework resulting in improvements in performance on standardized quizzes (Daugherty, 2008). Motivational Interviewing may also have a positive impact on academic achievement as this counseling approach values autonomy and may potentially strengthen an adolescent’s ability to make decisions (Sindelar, Abrantes, Hart, Lewander, & Spirito, 2006).

William Miller and Stephen Rollnick (2002) developed MI for the treatment of addictions. Motivational Interviewing is both a treatment philosophy and a set of strategies to assist people in increasing intrinsic motivation while resolving the ambivalence about behavior change (Lundahl & Burke, 2009; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). The focus of MI is to utilize a communication style in a collaborative environment that promotes behavior change. By amplifying the discrepancy between a client's broader goals and values, and their behavior, cognitive dissonance can occur leading to the beginning of behavior change. Motivational Interviewing is attracting much deserved attention from clinicians and researchers as it is being examined for use in a broad range of behavior change issues (Arkowitz & Westra, 2009).

Historically, much of the work of MI was focused on the problems of substance abuse and health-related behaviors, such as unprotected sex or exercise. Recently, William Miller stated how well MI appears to have efficacy with a wide range of behaviors in addition to addictive behaviors (Adams & Madison, 2006; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). The work of MI has predominately been focused on adults, although it is currently being explored as a suitable intervention to use with adolescent behavior changes (Kittle & Atkinson, 2009).

Although MI is not a set of techniques but more of a communication style, applying the principles of MI within a counseling session requires a set of strategies that are unique to MI. Effective application of MI strategies relies on a thorough understanding of how to apply these strategies.

## Motivational Interviewing Strategies and Principles

Motivational Interviewing interventions are goal oriented towards reducing the frequency of the problematic behaviors (Sindelar et al., 2006). Miller and Rollnick (2002) described four principles and therapeutic strategies that are used in MI. The principles of MI are: expressing empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, and supporting self-efficacy (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). An understanding of the principles and strategies that are comprised of MI is necessary for effective application.

- Principle 1- Express empathy. Counselors who use empathy attempt to experience the world from the perspective of the client without criticism, their own value system, or judgment. (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009)
- Principle 2- Develop Discrepancy. The counselor uses reflection skills to bring attention to the incongruence between the student's values and behaviors. By shedding light on this incongruence a discomfort is created that can lead to behavior change. An example of this strategy, "So, you find it very important to get good grades, and not turning in your homework interferes with this goal." The student should be the one who voices the arguments for change (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).
- Principle 3- Roll with resistance. In MI, resistance to change is conceptualized as ambivalence about changing (Arkowitz & Westra, 2009). The student may be aware of the benefits of making a behavior change, but develops concerns about making a change. Ambivalence is used as a tool for the counselor to learn more about the student and their fears. Instead of trying to control the student's

ambivalence, the counselor works with this ambivalence and uses it as tool to promote change. (Arkowitz & Westra, 2009; Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009).

- Principle 4- Support self-efficacy. During MI the counselor encourages the students ability to make a change. The counselor supports the skills and abilities for follow through while examining the necessary actions to make a change. A main principle of MI is to have the student discuss the arguments for change rather than the counselor (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009; Miller & Rose, 2009; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Self-efficacy is critical for the motivation for change and is an excellent predictor of therapeutic results (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009).

### ***Motivational Interviewing Therapist skills***

Many MI skills are grounded in Rogers' client centered therapy (1977), and include asking open-ended questions, listening reflectively, affirming, and summarizing (Hecht, Borrelli, Breger, DeFrancesco, Ernst, & Resnicow, 2005). A defining part of MI is using empathy (Lewis & Osborn 2004; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Empathy lessens the resistance from clients and increases self -motivational language (Lewis & Osborn, 2004; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Using the following skills, OARS within the therapeutic relationship creates a client -centered relationship within a MI setting:

- O-Open-ended questions
- A-Affirming
- R-Reflective listening
- S-Summarizing

These skills referred to as OARS are important to create a therapeutic client-centered environment; however, it is imperative that a counselor uses these four skills in a

directive, strategic style to enhance client's motivation (Hecht et al., 2005). This directive style elicits and reinforces change talk that is intentionally directive and specific to MI (Arkowitz & Westra, 2009).

TABLE 1. Menu of strategies (adapted from Kittles & Atkinson, 2009; & Miller & Rollnick, 2002)

<p>1. Opening Discussion</p> <p>Give the student a safe space to discuss the current situation. The discussion may relate specifically to the maladaptive behavior that is causing the concern.</p>
<p>2. A typical meeting</p> <p>Invite the student to describe an average day when the behavior/issue did or did not occur. Ask the student to talk about the day from start to finish. Have the student identify when the issue/problem exists and when it doesn't.</p>
<p>3. The good things and the less good things</p> <p>The student should have the opportunity to discuss the good things about the behavior and the not so good things about the behavior. The counselor helps to reflect on both discussions without labeling or arguing for change. For example a student might reflect on the good things about not doing any homework such as having more times with friends. Then the student could reflect on the less good things such as, their parents being frustrated and being grounded on the weekends.</p>
<p>4. Providing Information</p> <p>This has to be approached with great patience and sensitivity. The counselor asks permission to provide some information and avoids giving advice or arguing for change. Describing what other students have found helpful can be of assistance during the decision making process</p>
<p>5. The future and the present</p> <p>This strategy is most beneficial with students who already have concerns about the behavior. Exploration of the current circumstances can help with the motivation to change. A question might be, <i>How would you like things to change in the next 6 months?</i></p>

## 6. Exploring concerns

Listen reflectively to what the student shares and attempts to intervene during the best time to help the discussions move forward while eliciting concerns about behavioral change.

The use of these strategies and principles are conducive to effective application of MI.

Considering that collaboration and maintaining autonomy are important factors of MI, counselors provide support and guidance towards healthy goals that are developed from the client narrative. Resistance is avoided by validating that the responsibility and choice for change ultimately rest with the client (Wagner & Ingersoll, 2009; Hecht et al., 2005). It is within the combination of these principles and strategies that change can occur.

In this current research, we explore the possibility that the use of MI, with capable, yet, academically unmotivated students could serve as an effective intervention for school counselors. Specifically, we ask if sessions of Motivational Interviewing with a school counselor will have a direct impact on the academic work production of students and if this impact is quantifiable.

### **Materials and Methodology**

#### ***Research Design***

The design for this study is the multiple baseline, non-concurrent experimental research design. This study measures the effect that motivational interviewing sessions have on academic work production for participants. We examined the percentage of work completion prior, during, and 15 school days posttreatment. The term “single-case” refers to the focus of the study, rather than the number of participants.

Multiple baseline design is appropriate for studies when it is impossible for the participants to return to the original baseline. Harvey, May, & Kennedy (2004) asserted, “multiple baseline design lends itself to use within educational research as many instructive practices cannot be readily withdrawn or reversed ” (p.269). Using varying baselines will demonstrate if the intervention (MI) had an impact on student work production percentages.

Participants were randomly assigned to varying baselines. These participants had the following baselines; Participant 1 (LW) with a 5 day baseline, Participant 2 (JA) with a 10 day baseline, and Participant 3 (BM) with a 15 day baseline. These baseline periods consisted of school calendar days and did not include weekend days and days when school was not in session. Participants entered the data collection baseline for the assigned period of time. Following this they entered a treatment period of six sessions, which occurred over the course of three weeks. After completing treatment, participants entered a posttreatment for a period of 15 school days during which data continued to be collected on the amount of work submitted in each three classes.

### ***Hypothesis***

- The alternative hypothesis of this study is that there is a difference in work production percentages during the time period when the independent variable is introduced (Motivational Interviewing sessions) and the baseline time period
- The null hypothesis of this study is that there is no difference in work production percentages during the baseline time period and the intervention time period.

### ***Participants***

Participants (n=3) age 11-14 years. Experimental control with a multiple baseline design requires a minimum of two participants. Participants included in this study were three randomly chosen students who met the following criteria: (1) not passing two or more core classes, (2) passing scores on statewide assessments, (3) no attendance concerns, (4) had not individually worked with the school counselor in the past, (5) were not placed on an IEP or 504 plan, (6), had no referrals for social-emotional concerns, (7) had informed consent. Participants were BM, a female participant age 13; JA, a male participant age 13; and LW, a male participant age 13.

### ***Participant Criteria***

1. Data was gathered through Inza Wood Middle School's data collection system School Master, narrowed the participants to eighth grade students who were not passing two or more classes. This system filtered out students who had an IEP, or a 504 plan.
2. School Master system was used to exclude students who had attendance issues. These students were excluded because lack of attendance could have been the reason for academic challenges.
3. Cumulative school record files were reviewed by the school counselor who in turn determined if participants had passed the most recent state assessment, excluding students from the study if they had not passed their most recent state assessment.
4. Participants were excluded from the study if they were currently receiving other school counseling academic interventions.
5. The remaining students were given a number and three numbers (participants) were randomly selected.

### ***Informed Consent***

A complete description of the process for the research study was given to the participants and parents before the beginning of MI sessions. Participants (students) and parents and/or guardians signed the informed consent statements (See appendix a). The researcher explained the study and participation requirements, including the information that participants, parents and/or guardians could end the experience at any time.

### ***Data Collection***

Teachers at Inza Wood Middle School are required by building administrators to update their online grade book on a weekly basis. Teachers have a record of missing assignments for each student and update assignments via their grade book as daily classroom and homework assignments are turned in. The data on work production was utilized to monitor participant academic progress. For the purposes of this study, the classes that were monitored were social studies, math, and language arts. Excluded from data collection was the academic subject of science. Exclusion of science was determined to be appropriate because of the difficulty of monitoring work production for a class such as science, in which there was a lack of quantifiable data in this experiential learning class. Physical education, music, and elective classes were not monitored because they are not core academic classes. To track the data during the baseline time period, the researcher saved PDF files of the online collection of missing assignments of the three participants during, baseline, intervention, and for 15 school days posttreatment.

### ***Treatment***

Following the baseline period each participant attended six Motivational Interviewing sessions. Motivational Interviewing sessions typically consist of 30-60 minutes. For the purposes of this study the MI sessions consisted of 45-minute meetings twice a week for three weeks. Sessions followed the client-centered guidelines of Motivational Interviewing.

#### Session outline

Session One Opening structure; OARS

Session Two Evoke change talk; decisional balance worksheet

Session Three Elaborate on change

Session Four Visit extremes; look back

Session Five Look forward; discuss closure

Session Six Explore goals; discuss change plan; termination

### ***Treatment Fidelity***

The treatment sessions followed the principles grounded in MI. In addition, the handbook, *Building Motivational Skills* (2009), by David Rosengren, was utilized to ensure fidelity to the standard MI treatment protocol.

### ***Procedures***

After obtaining Internal Review Board approval and school administration support, the school counselor was contacted to meet with the researcher to filter the data for eligible participants. The school counselor collected the data and filtered all eighth grade students through the eligibility criteria to determine the participant pool. The eighth grade population consists of 220 students who were all filtered through the criteria,

and 30 participants were determined to fit the criteria. Informed consents were sent to all 30 eligible participants. Six consent forms were returned with signatures of consent. Three participants were randomly selected from the six students. Once informed consent was established, participants were randomly assigned to the baseline time period. After the students were assigned baseline periods, data collection began. Teachers of the three participants were met with as a team and were informed about the participants and the process of treatment. Teachers were asked to accommodate the researcher when students were removed from class. Arrangements were made with teachers to allow students flexibility in making up any missing work that occurred during the time period where students missed class to attend treatment sessions. Data was collected using the online School Master Pass system. Using the participants ID and pin code, the researcher collected daily grading reports from the School Master system. These reports were then saved in PDF format. Reports were saved in an online folder using student initials. The researcher met with all participants in a private classroom or office space depending on availability of space in the school. Each participant had the same treatment structure although content of treatment sessions was tailored to participant's personal experience. During baseline, intervention, and follow up period work production data was gathered using the School Master system.

### **Data Analysis**

Given the small sample size, statistical tests were not utilized to determine if there was a significant change in work production percentages. Visual data analysis was used to interpret the results of the study. The results provide a visual display of the information concerning the work production percentages of each student across three

subject areas: language arts, math, and social studies. For each student visual data analysis was used to establish baseline work production percentages and to document the variations in percentages throughout treatment and during the 15-day posttreatment time period. The data that was collected was work production percentages and when a student did not produce any work in class or in the form of homework, the student received a zero for work production. Upon examining the graphs it is apparent that although participant BM and JA had an increase in work production during the posttreatment period, the results were not significant. Participant BM demonstrated improvements mainly in the subject area of language arts and social studies. BM did not show much improvement in math. Participant JA demonstrated improvements in language arts, mathematics, and social studies. Participant LW demonstrated a decline in work production in all three-subject areas. Comparing work production percentages during baseline and posttreatment: participant BM had higher percentages in the subject areas of social studies and language arts and JA had higher percentages of work production in all three subjects. When comparing baseline and follow-up work production percentages for participant LW, all three subject areas had lower percentages in the follow-up period. Overall, visual data analysis showed that participants BM and JA had increased work production percentages after treatment and participant LW had lower work production percentages posttreatment.

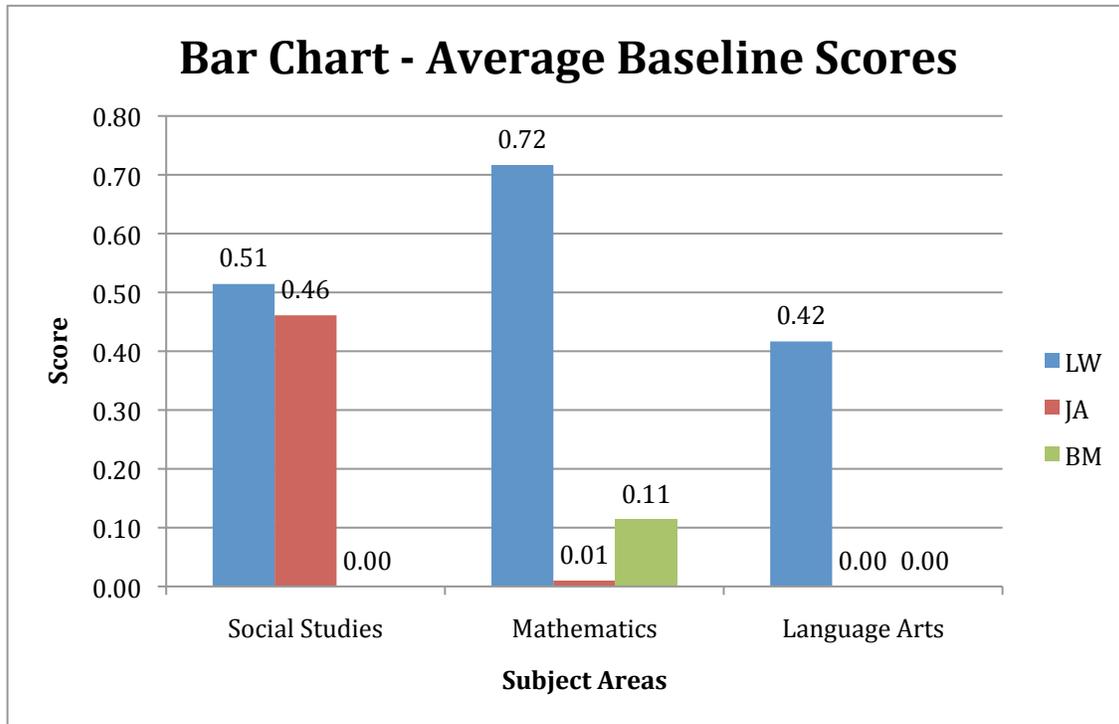


Table 3.1 Average baseline period work production percentages across three subject areas for three participants

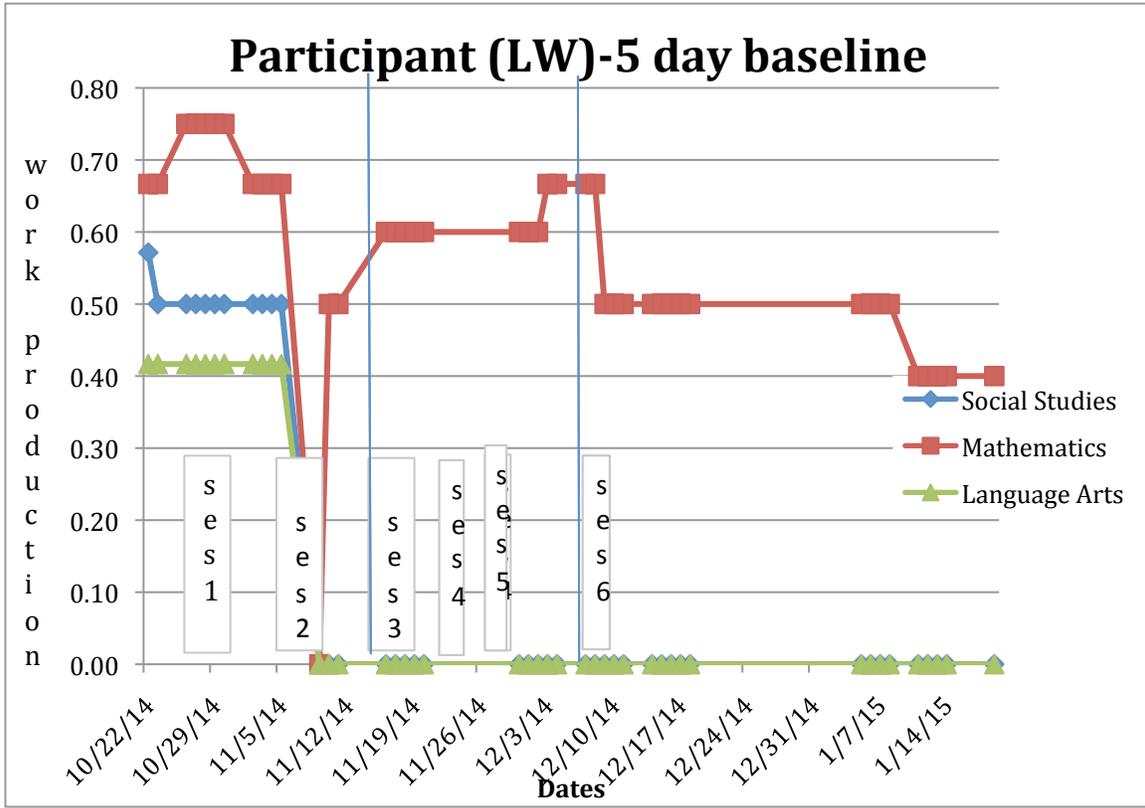


Table 3.2 Participant LW who was in five school day baseline period. Timeline chart showing work production percentages during baseline period, throughout treatment period six sessions, and posttreatment period of 15 school days.

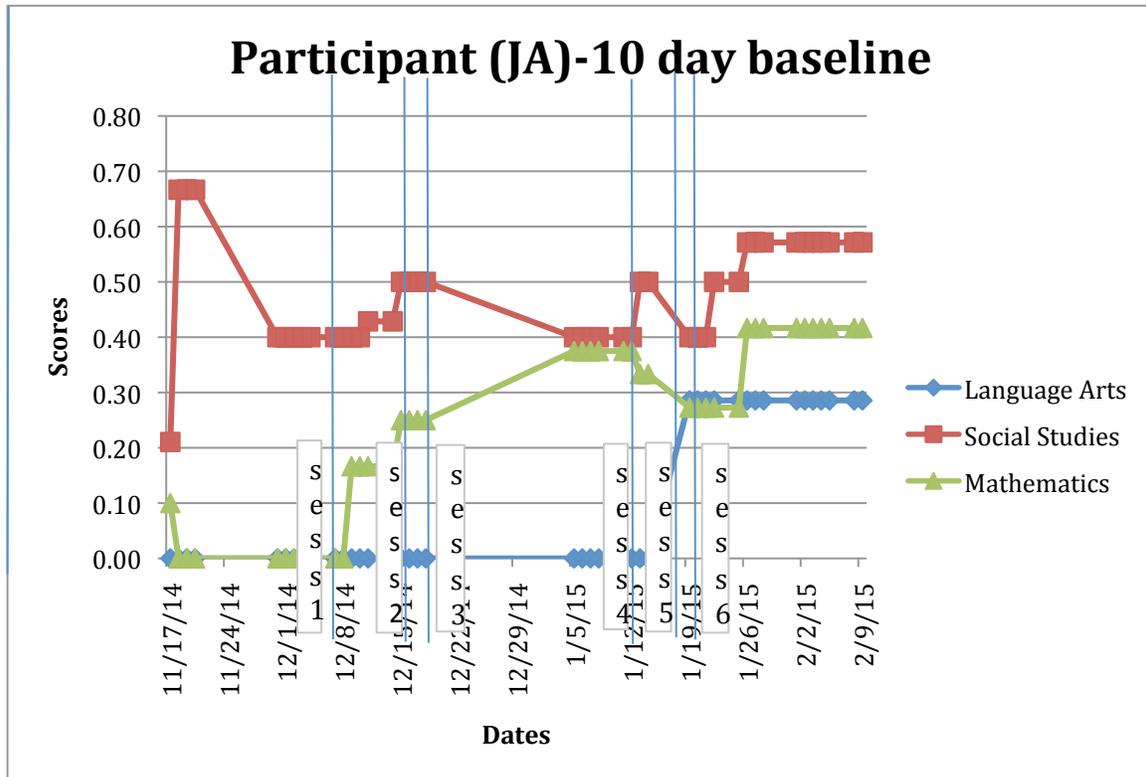


Table 3.3 Participant JA was in a ten school day baseline period. Timeline chart demonstrating work production percentages during baseline period, throughout treatment period six sessions, and posttreatment period of 15 school days.

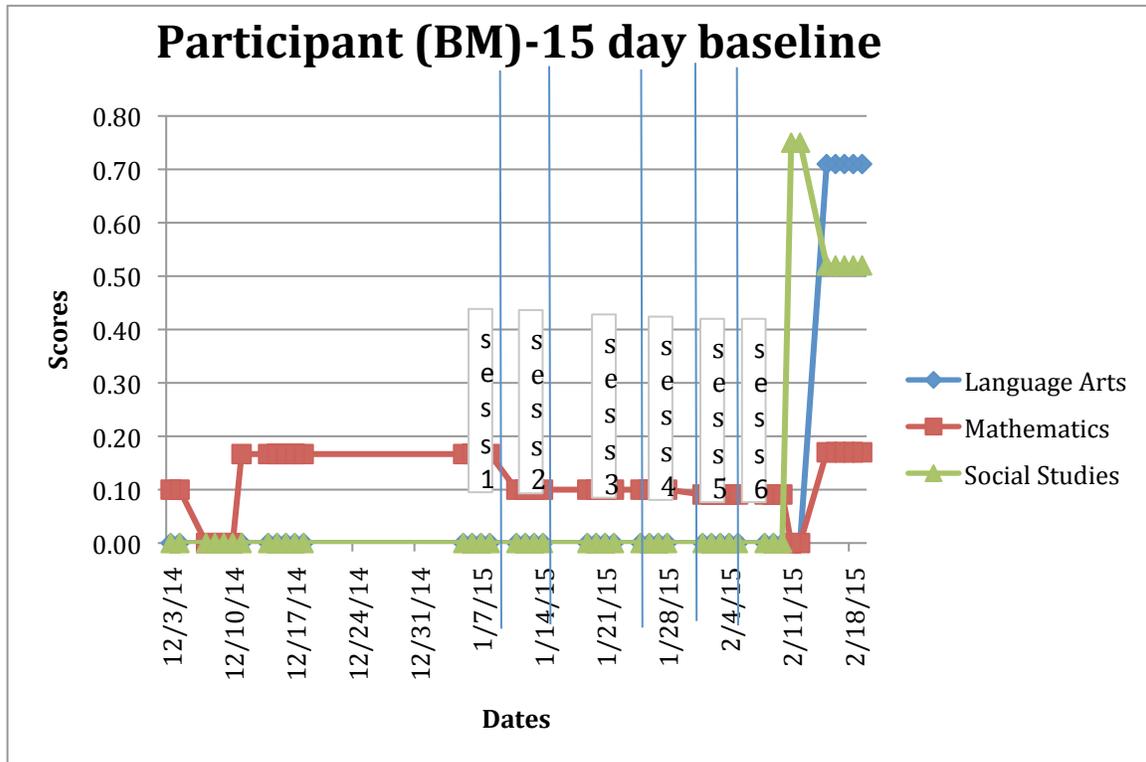


Table 3.4 Participant BM was in a 15 school day baseline period. Timeline chart demonstrating work production percentages during baseline period, throughout treatment period six sessions, and posttreatment period of 15 school days.

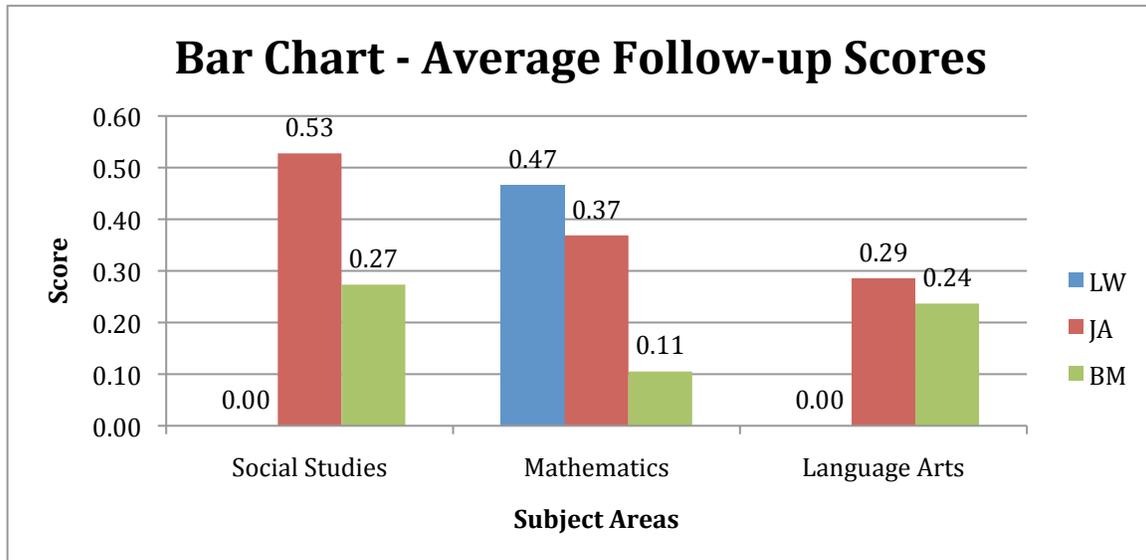


Table 3.5 Average work production percentages during follow up period, which was a period of 15 school days posttreatment, work production across three subject areas for all three participants.

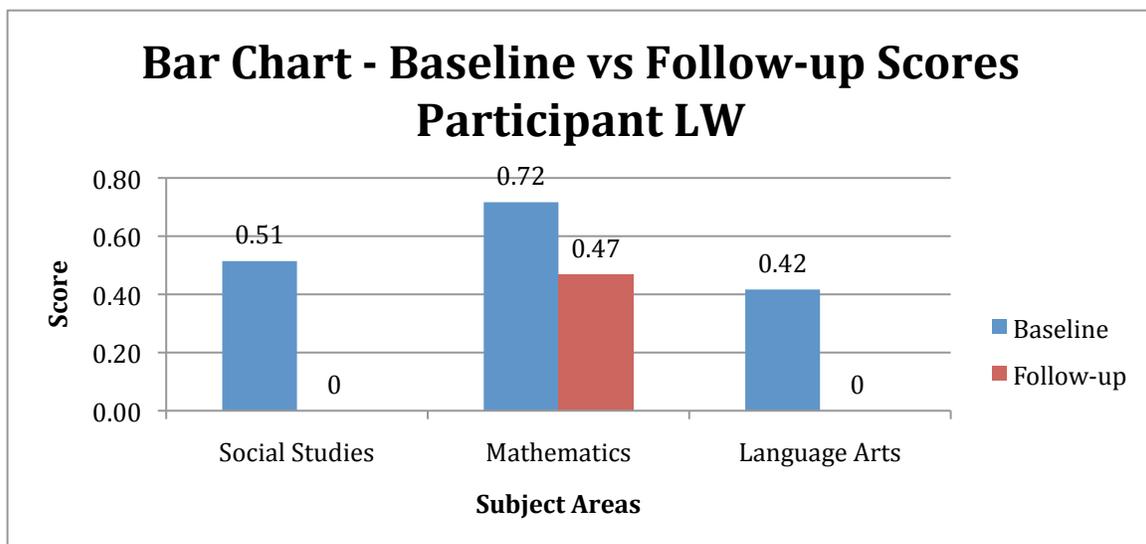


Table 3.6 Baseline vs. follow up work production percentages across three subject areas for participant LW

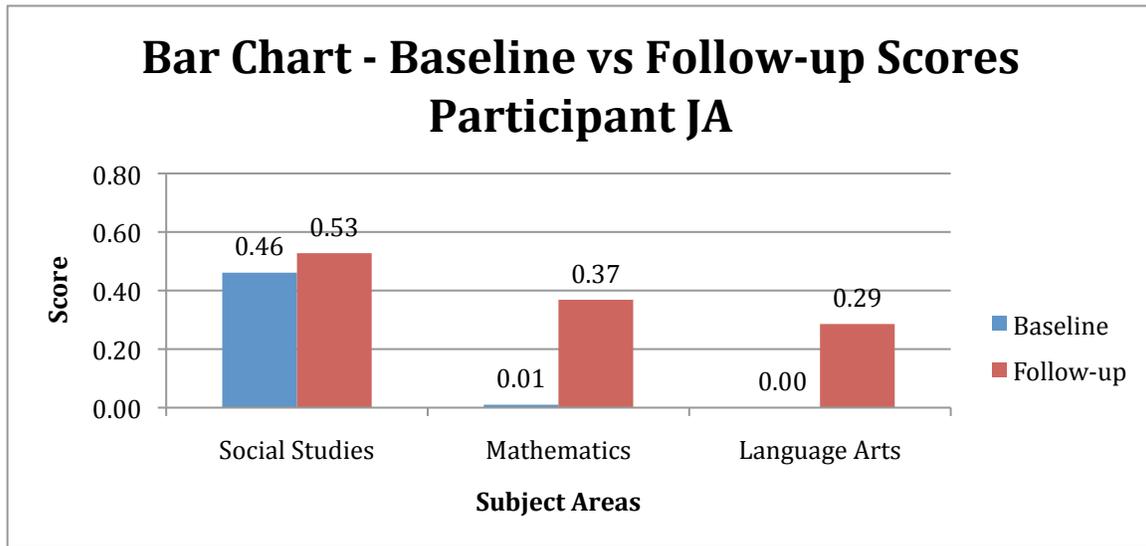


Table 3.7 Baseline vs. follow up work production percentages across three subject areas for participant JA.

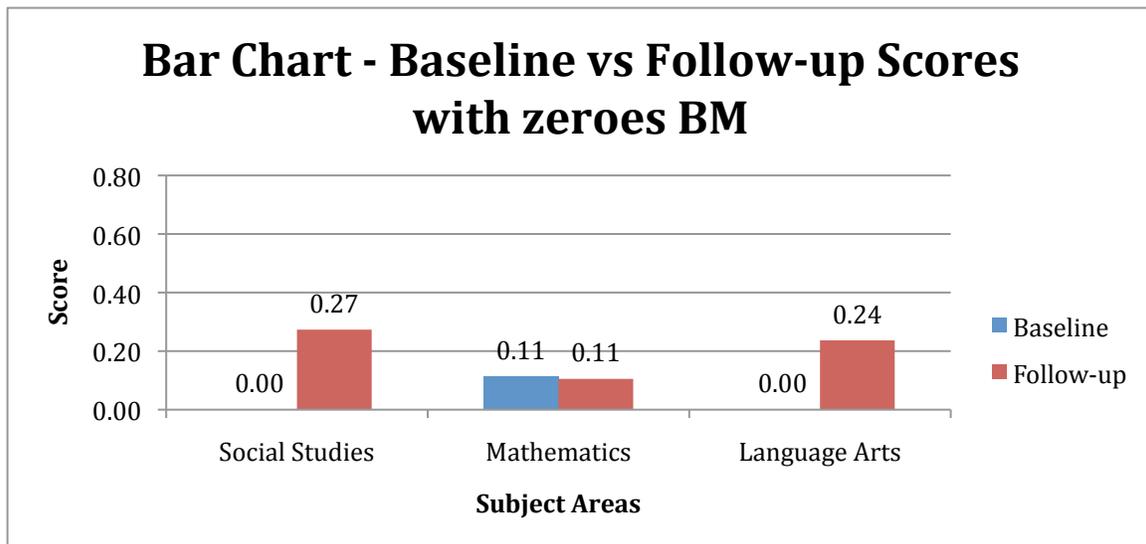


Table 3.8 Baseline vs. follow up work production percentages across all three-subject areas for participant BM.

## Discussion

Although significant improvement in work production percentages was limited for all three students, there are several potential reasons why the differences are not statistically significant; some have to do with issues that arose with student participants, some with the treatment, and some have to do with the data that was collected.

A variety of issues impacted all three participants. During MI sessions participants provided information that can help to understand their experience and the results of the study. For participant BM there were many life challenges. During the time period of session two this participant's boy friend attempted suicide and was placed in the hospital. This added stress to this participant and school attendance was greatly impacted. During the time period of session five the participant BM decided to terminate the relationship with her boy friend in order to focus more on her own life. After session six and this termination of the relationship, work production did increase.

For participant JA there was less improvement in work production for social studies, anecdotal information that was provided to the researcher included that writing and reading in the subject of social studies was an area that he did not feel particularly confident in. However, there was more improvement in language arts and mathematics which were subject areas he stated that he found more enjoyable.

For participant LW, he felt as though the only subject that he enjoyed was mathematics. He stated that the subjects of language arts and social studies were subjects that he did not care about and did not feel as though he was capable of producing work in those particular subjects. In addition to his lack of work production during the time period of treatment, he had behavioral outbursts in the classroom that resulted in various

behavioral interventions such as in-school suspension. This was new behavior for this participant. During the treatment period he began to demonstrate a lack of disrespect for teachers such as talking out of turn and defying teachers' classroom rules. This participant's behavior very likely negatively impacted his level of work production.

It is possible to hypothesize that an increase in sessions may have had a positive impact on the work production percentages. The literature supports MI as a brief intervention with six sessions considered an adequate number of sessions; however, the challenges of not being able to consistently meet with students due to the school calendar suggests, increasing the amount of sessions may be needed to curb the detrimental impact of the length of time that often occurred between sessions.

Furthermore, it is possible that collecting additional types of data other than work production percentages may have provided more information regarding student performance, e.g., grade reports, classroom participation data, and achievement scores.

### **Limitations of this study**

One of the limitations and threats to validity was the school calendar. Research was conducted during a time period in which the holiday season impacted the school calendar resulting in many days when school was not in session. This meant a significant amount of time in which the students were not in school. Furthermore, this time away from school meant that influences such as the holidays, time spent alone with family, and family vacations could have impacted student performance. In addition to the holiday season, furlough days and teacher in-service days created a challenge for consistent timing for sessions.

Another threat to internal validity was the involvement of teachers and parents. Teachers and parents were aware of the participant's involvement in the study. This awareness could have led to teachers or parents becoming more involved with the participant in terms of their academic performance. On the other hand, teachers and parents may have become less involved in terms of support for the student because they felt as though student participation in the study was responsible for improving academic performance.

Another limitation was student absences which led to session timing being more erratic. Although participants did not enter into the study with prior attendance concerns, absences did occur while the student was in the treatment portion of the study. The researcher tried to control for this occurrence by ensuring that sessions were as close to the two times a week treatment plan, but it was not always possible to adhere to two sessions during the school week. If a student was absent, the researcher attempted to meet with the student upon the student returning to school. This attendance issue resulted in a lack of consistency for all sessions. Although sessions were scheduled to occur twice a week, there were times when a student missed a session and that session had to be moved to the following week, resulting in weeks when the student was only able to participate in one session. Therefore, there was a lack of consistent timing between each session. Although this is the reality of working with students within a school setting, it did impact the consistency and validity of the session outline.

Another limitation was consistency of the physical meeting space for sessions. Lack of adequate meeting space in the school building led to sessions that were interrupted by faculty members with a need to utilize the room that was used for sessions.

Although the researcher attempted to control these interruptions by placing a note for privacy outside the meeting room door and informing faculty of the need for privacy in the meeting space, ultimately interruptions by faculty did impact the flow of the sessions.

Another limitation and threat to validity was the sample size and participant demographics. Three students were selected to participate in sessions. Although this is an adequate sample size for a multiple baseline study, a larger sample size would have been more reflective of the demographics in the school and would have increased the internal and external validity.

Furthermore, there was a limitation in the data that was collected. Work production data was collected and although this provides information concerning the academic progress of the participants, it does not provide information about the quality of work that was completed.

A final possible limitation was the researcher did not receive supervision, during the time in which the MI counseling sessions occurred. Although the researcher is trained in MI, supervision during the treatment period would have increased treatment fidelity. We have considered, but are unable to quantify, the uncertainties introduced by each of these limitations.

### **Implications for researchers**

Given the responsibility impendent on counselors to intervene with students who have a lack of academic motivation that is leading to failing grades, further research on interventions is recommended by this study. Results of this study indicate a need for further research examining the impact of MI sessions on academic achievement.

In particular, this researcher recommends conducting a study where a larger sample size is utilized. More research is needed to understand the usefulness and applicability of MI in school settings. Based on the results of this study a larger study including more sessions provided to participants could further inform school counselors about the impact that MI may have on academic progress, and if it is an effective intervention for this particular age group.

A more detailed study including other data in addition to work production such as grades, classroom participation, and achievement scores could provide more information concerning the effectiveness of MI.

### **Conclusion**

This study examines Motivational Interviewing as an intervention to improve work production in academically unmotivated students. Research reported in the literature review testifies to the importance of establishing an effective intervention for students who are academically unmotivated and at risk for exiting school in lieu of graduation. Academic motivation is related to grades, work production, and academic achievement scores. Motivational Interviewing has proved to have a positive impact on addictive behavior reduction, health related behavior concerns, smoking, and weight loss. Recently, it has been proved successful with reducing school truancy in adolescents and improving the academic performance of college students. These findings make it reasonable to ask if MI could have a positive impact on students who are academically unmotivated. School counselors are searching for an intervention that can improve the academic motivation of students who are underachieving.

To explore the use of MI as an intervention, we provided six MI sessions to three eighth grade participants. We conducted a multiple baseline study with baselines of five, ten, and 15 days. We collected data on student work production during the baseline period, during the treatment period, and 15 school days post treatment indicated as the follow up period. Although results of the study did not show significant academic improvements, two out of three of the participants showed improvements in work production percentages for two out of three subjects. Our results raise several possibilities:

- Motivational Interviewing can increase work production percentages with particular students
- If school counselors use MI sessions, they may need to have more than six sessions in order to have a positive academic impact
- Motivational Interviewing may not have a positive academic impact on certain types of students, as seen with participant LW

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## **Chapter Four: General Conclusion**

This dissertation study created two manuscripts thematically linked together to examine the use of MI within school counseling programs for academically unmotivated students. Reviews of the literature indicated a need for intervention with underachieving adolescents. In addition, the literature documented how school counselors are intricately involved in improving the academic achievement of their student populations. Furthermore, a need for an intervention strategy was established, and MI was determined to be a promising strategy that could improve the academic motivation of students; thus, positively impacting academic achievement. This document provided empirical research on the impact of MI sessions with a school counselor on the work production percentages of three eighth grade student participants.

The researcher was interested in this topic of study as a result of working with academically underachieving students during six-years employment as a middle school counselor. During this six year time period, the researcher noticed a percentage of students who were academically capable, yet struggling with work production which was detrimental to their academic performance. Upon noticing this student population and investigating the personal story of these students, the researcher recognized that many students who were struggling academically were displaying behaviors such as avoiding homework, not turning in classwork, and disengaging from their classes. Further examination of students cumulative records emphasized that many students had been academically successful in the past, had passed state tests, and had no documented behavioral or emotional issues. Given this information the researcher met individually

with students and discovered that many of these students voiced statements concerning their lack of motivation to commit to academic work. This information led to the researchers personal realization that there was a need for an intervention strategy for academically capable, yet, underachieving students. Further research into this concern documented that other school counselors were noticing similar behaviors and also were concerned for their student's lack of academic motivation and the inevitable negative impact on school performance.

Both of the manuscripts discussed the alarmingly trends of school failure, and the relationship between motivation and academic success. In addition, these manuscripts studied the intervention, MI, and its use for enhancing motivation for academic achievement. An emphasis throughout both manuscripts was the new vision for school counselors, in which they are held accountable to improve the academic success of students. The review of the literature and a more detailed study within Chapter 3, discussed the results of the research, and emphasized a need for further research on the use of MI for academically unmotivated students.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Determining an academic intervention for underachievers serves to promote academic achievement and supports the new vision for school counseling programs. The increased emphasis in the school counseling profession for contribution to the academic achievement of students further establishes a need for more research on academic interventions by school counselors.

Further research into the use of MI with students who are academically unmotivated is necessary to determine the effectiveness of this intervention. In

particular, this research recommends conducting a study in which a larger sample size is utilized. At this point it is uncertain whether this intervention is appropriate for this age group; a study with a larger sample size could provide more information on the efficacy of this intervention. Although, MI with adolescents has shown efficacy in reducing health risk behaviors such as smoking (Flaherty, 2006), and has reduced the frequency of school truancy (Enea & Dafinoiu, 2009), there continues to be a need to further understand the impact of this strategy with adolescents.

In addition to further examination of the use of MI with adolescents, more research is needed to understand the usefulness and applicability of MI within school settings. The school setting poses challenges for providing personal counseling given the demanding daily schedule in schools and the fluctuating school calendar. Given these challenges which can hinder providing a consistent counseling intervention, further understanding of how to incorporate MI in school settings is encouraged by this study.

Based on the results of this study, a larger study including more sessions provided to participants, could further inform school counselors about the impact that MI may have on academic progress. Furthermore, a next step in this area of research should be a more detailed study including other data in addition to work production, such as grades, classroom participation, or achievement scores which could provide more information concerning the effectiveness of MI.

Little research has studied the use of MI with culturally diverse populations. Given that this research study had three participants all of whom identified as Caucasian, it would be beneficial to the field of school counseling to study the use of MI with diverse student groups.

**Multicultural Considerations**

It is important to acknowledge that this study did not reflect the diversity within a typical public school. All three participants included in the study identified as Caucasian. This participant group was not reflective of the demographics of Inza Wood Middle School. Specifically, the demographics of the school consisted of 19 percent of students who identified as being a member of a minority group. In terms of this study many students who met most of the participant criteria were excluded because they participated in the English Language Learners (ELL) program. Many of these students identified as Hispanic. The researcher was purposeful about this exclusion given the possibility that rather than a lack of motivation, a language barrier could be impacting student's academic achievement. The exclusion of this population did hinder the study from truly reflecting student demographics.

**Future uses of results from this research**

The purpose of this study was to review the literature related to MI within a school counseling setting for academically unmotivated students. This review of literature examined school counselors need for intervention strategies with academically struggling students. This review discussed how lack of academic motivation is an indicator for academic underachievement. Results of this research could assist counselors in understanding the role of motivation in academic achievement. The results of this study shed light on the possibility that MI may not be effective with this particular age group. Therefore, it may be useful to replicate this study with high school students in order to determine the efficacy with an older student population.

**Summary**

There is sufficient evidence that MI may be a promising strategy for school counselors to employ in order to improve the academic achievement of students who are struggling with motivation. Literature suggests that academic success is dependent on motivation and that MI can have a positive impact on motivation for behavior change. In conjuncture with this literature, research from this study suggests that MI sessions with a trained school counselor can have a positive impact on the work production percentages of students who are struggling with academic motivation. Further research is necessary to determine the efficacy of MI with adolescent populations struggling with academic motivation. In addition, further study is recommended to understand the applicability of MI in public school settings and its use with students of color.

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APPENDIX

**Appendix A: Informed Consent**



College of Education

Oregon State University, 210 Education Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-3502

Tel 541-737-4661 | Fax 541-737-8971 | <http://oregonstate.edu/education>

Project Title: **Motivational Interviewing with Academically Unmotivated Students**

Principal Investigator: **Dr. Gene Eakin**

Co-Investigator(s): **Heather Hadraba MS NCC PhD Candidate**

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

You are being asked to take part in a study on a counseling technique called Motivational Interviewing. This study is looking at the impact of Motivational interviewing on student motivation. The hypothesis is that this type of counseling could increase your motivation, which will improve your academics. The information that is wanted is the amount of work you produce during the time of this intervention. The results of this study will be used for a dissertation. We are studying this because we are interested in finding a way to increase student motivation.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?**

This consent form gives you information you will need to help you decide whether you want to take part in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible pros and cons, your rights, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. You can contact the researcher, Wood Middle School Counselor with any questions. The researcher is the former counselor at Inza Wood Middle School.

### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are failing two or more classes are a capable student, you have no attendance issues, you have passed 7<sup>th</sup> grade state tests, are academically capable but your grades and work habits are not showing your capabilities.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE**

If you choose to be a part of this study your schoolwork will be monitored during a time period called the baseline period. This time period will be a randomly assigned length of 5,10,or 15 school days. The baseline period is used to get an idea of how much work is being done before counseling is given. During this period, you will have daily work information gathered from each of your teachers. The researcher will collect this information daily. This information allows the researcher to look at how much work you are doing before, during, and after intervention. This information will be gathered before, during and after intervention for a total of nine weeks. After the baseline, you will begin the intervention time period. The missing assignment information will also be gathered during the time period of intervention. During the intervention you will meet with a trained counselor for Motivational Interviewing sessions on academic motivation. These sessions will take place in a private office in the school. The researcher is a licensed school counselor and a nationally certified counselor.

During these sessions, the researcher will use motivational interviewing skills to help you reflect on goals. Motivational Interviewing is a type of counseling that allows you to explore making a behavior change. You will be asked to reflect on the positives and negatives of making a change. During each session you will review academic goals and discuss what you might need to be able to make a change. You will reflect on past academic behaviors and challenges. You will discuss pros and cons to making an academic change. Motivational interviewing sessions are student focused and give you time to think about possible changes.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will take part for three weeks 2 times a week for 45 minutes.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?**

There are some possible risks. You will miss class time. Missing class time could lead to you falling behind in class work. You will be given extra time to make up any work that you missed due to missing class for this intervention. This will be set up with your classroom teacher. Lack of confidentiality is a risk, but we will work to keep confidentiality by using initials on all missing sheets and by keeping the sessions private. There is a risk that when you miss class peers may be aware of participation. Prearranged times to meet with the researcher will help to lower this risk. All paperwork will use your initials to keep your privacy.

Although the focus of this study is academic, you may become upset because of the personal nature of the setting. The researcher will let you know that you can end the session. The researcher will offer to end the session if you are upset. If there is a concern that you are struggling with emotions that cannot be solved in an academic session, the researcher may offer you a referral to the school counselor who can work with you or refer you to an outside counselor. These referrals will be given to you and your parent/legal guardian.

The researcher is a mandatory reporter, which means that if you report any abuse or neglect; the researcher will have to report to social services.

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

We do not know if you will benefit from being in this study. A possible benefit could be improved work production, improvement in grades, and improvement in motivation or academic outlook. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because it may help find an intervention for students who are academically capable but struggling with motivation. We hope that this intervention will be able to help build motivation for students.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?**

You **will not** be paid for being in this research study

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. To help protect your privacy, we will be using your initials on all forms. They will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

If the results of this project are published your identity will not be made public

**DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?**

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information about you and this information may be included in study reports.

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Heather Hadraba phone number is 503-550-0631 and email is [hadraba@lclark.edu](mailto:hadraba@lclark.edu), or Dr. Gene Eakin, his number is 541-737-8551 and email is [gene.eakin@oregonstate.edu](mailto:gene.eakin@oregonstate.edu) If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu).

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Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

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*Parent/Guardian or Legally Authorized Representative (printed)* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature *Parent/Guardian or Legally Authorized Representative*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

